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ABSTRACT

A practicum was designed for parents to acquire the understanding, skills, resources, materials, and wherewithal to support the emergent literacy development of their children on exiting the Head Start program to be successful in kindergarten. A simple, cost-effective, comprehensive, multidimensional project including Parent Workshops, a Home-Classroom Library, Parent-Reading Volunteers, Can-Collection Project, a Home-Friend Project, and a Parent-Child Computer Lab was established. Businesses, community service organizations, families, and school personnel were involved in creating and contributing to the project. Parents were provided with many choices which were convenient for them in their life situations to participate in and to become aware of their importance upon the emergent literacy development of their young children. Parent-child activities involving literacy were held in the classroom to enhance parental involvement. Results indicated that (1) all parents participated in literacy activities with their children daily; (2) five parents participated in computer literacy activities with their children five or more times a week; (3) all the parents felt "more confident" reading to their children; (4) all students were developmentally 1 year or less below their chronological age when exiting the preschool program; (5) 12 students were placed on a list to be recommended for kindergarten; and (6) all students received a positive score on an oral survey indicating that they were able to distinguish printed words from illustrations in books. (Contains 79 references, and 1 table and 1 figure of data. Survey instruments, a computer lab log, and a parent workshop log are attached.) (Author/RS)

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Promoting the Literacy Development of Preschool Children for Kindergarten Success Through Parental Involvement and Computer Technology

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by

Lisa M. Lauer

Cluster 58

A Practicum II Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

1995

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by Lisa Lauer under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved

Jan. 2, 1996
Date of Final Approval of Report

Joyce S. DeLeone
Joyce S. DeLeone, Ph. D., Adviser

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The idea of creating a project whereby students, parents, educators, and the community worked together to support literacy in enhancing the children's success in kindergarten was born out of the fascination students exhibited while engaging in activities with books and the belief that the students' parents are their most influential teachers. The writer is indebted and grateful to many for the creation and implementation of this project. In particular, the writer would like to thank the students and parents for their participation, enthusiasm, and support for this project.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	v
ABSTRACT	vi
Chapter	
I INTRODUCTION	7
Description of the Community	7
Writer's Work Setting	8
Writer's Role and Responsibilities	9
II STUDY OF THE PROBLEM	11
Problem Description	11
Problem Documentation	14
Causative Analysis	16
Relationship of the Problem to the Literature	18
III ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS	26
Goals and Expectations	26
Expected Outcomes	26
Measurement of Outcomes	27
IV SOLUTION STRATEGY	29
Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions	29
Description of Selected Solutions	39
Report of Action Taken	42

V RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS 57
Results 57
Discussion 62
Recommendations 76
Dissemination 76
REFERENCES 78
Appendices
A PARENT SURVEY 88
B COMPUTER LAB LOG 90
C PARENT WORKSHOP LOG 92
D STUDENT SURVEY 94

LIST OF TABLES

Table
1 Predicted and Post Survey Comparison 61

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure
1 Family-School Literacy Project Model 63

ABSTRACT

Previewing the Literacy Development of Preschool Children for Kindergarten Success Through Parental Involvement and Computer Technology. Lauer, Lisa M., 1995. Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Emergent Literacy/Parental Involvement/ Early Childhood Education/ Home-Classroom Library/ Literacy Workshops/At-Risk Preschool Children/Computer Technology/Kindergarten Success

This practicum was designed for parents to acquire the understanding, skills, resources, materials, and wherewithal to support the emergent literacy development of their young on exiting the Head Start Program to be successful in kindergarten. A simple, cost-effective, comprehensive, multidimensional project including Parent Workshops, a Home-Classroom Library, Parent-Reading Volunteers, Can-Collection Project, a Home-Friend Project, and a Parent-Child Computer Lab was established. Businesses, community service organizations, families, and school personnel were involved in creating and contributing to this project. Parents, working in partnership with teachers, were provided with many choices which were convenient for them in their life situations to participate in and to become aware of their importance upon the emergent literacy development of their young children. Parent-child activities involving literacy were held in the classroom to enhance parental involvement.

Assessment instruments and oral surveys of the students and their parents were conducted to determine the literacy needs of both groups and success rates into kindergarten. From these surveys and assessments, the writer was able to acquire the evidence of the problem that students were exiting the Head Start program without the literacy background necessary to be successful in kindergarten.

Analysis of the data after the implementation had been completed revealed that all parents participated in literacy activities with their children daily; five parents participated in computer literacy activities with their children five or more times a week; all the parents indicated that they felt "more confident" reading to their children; all students were developmentally 1 year or less below their chronological age when exiting the preschool program; twelve students were placed on a list to be recommended for kindergarten; and, all students received a positive score on an oral survey indicating they were able to distinguish printed words from illustrations in books.

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October 31, 1995

Lisa M. Lauer

Lisa M. Lauer

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The setting for this practicum was in a preschool center located in a small, southern, rural town in the United States, just outside a major port city. The center was one of two centers which was primarily federally funded and governed, and was supported by a public school system, state and local governments, and private businesses. During the 1994-95 school year, the public school system, in which this preschool resided, had a total student enrollment of 9,896, and provided education and related services for students who were at-risk 4-year-olds through twelfth graders. The school population was 65.3% White, 32.4% Black, 1.5% Hispanic, .6% Asian, and .2% Native-American. The preschool was a Head Start program, which began in 1980 serving 20 students, and presently provided education and services for 180 students and their families. In contrast with the public school population, the population of the preschool was 85% Black, 14% White, and 1% Hispanic.

The town was an industrial community, where occupations were mainly blue-collar and related to the oil, gas, and nuclear power industries, or related to the fishing and hunting industries. Since the decline in the oil and gas industry in the 1980's, unemployment has risen significantly. The rapid growth in the number of children and

families at-risk needing services at the preschool level since 1980 clearly reflected the effects of unemployment on the community. The population of the town was multi-ethnic, multi-cultural as was indicated by the population of the school system.

The socioeconomic status of the preschool population was disadvantaged and predominately Black. The majority of the households was headed by single females, many of whom had not completed high school. The number of parents participating in school functions was very low. Transportation to school functions was a major problem for parents, particularly since the center was located in a rural setting and public transportation was not available.

Writer's Work Setting

The preschool center in which this practicum took place contained five self-contained classrooms with 20 students, one teacher, and one teacher's assistant each. A janitor, nurse, and a Parent Center Aide were also on site. Administrators, staff, and other related personnel were located in a separate building five miles away from the preschool center.

A speech therapist and other service-related personnel were provided periodically by the public school system. The teachers in the preschool center possessed degrees in education with certification in early childhood education at the preschool level. The teachers' assistants possessed a Child Development Associate (CDA) certification.

Transportation for the preschool students was provided by the public school system. Students arrived at school by 9:30 a.m. after having breakfast at their primary schools. Students also received lunch and a snack during their daily routine in the preschool center.

The preschool provided medical and dental care for those students requiring attention.

Home visits by teachers, staff, and teachers' assistants were also part of the preschool program. The preschool program had been established to promote the social, emotional, physical, language, and cognitive skills of disadvantaged students. Teachers, teachers' assistants, and staff viewed the successfully developing child in a holistic manner. Although they recognized that the academic and affective needs of the child must be met, they also recognized that the health, safety, and security needs within the child's home and school environment must be met. This practicum occurred in the writer's classroom of 20 students, the preschool center, and within the children's primary schools. The parents, students, primary school personnel, and consultants had been invited to participate in this project.

Writer's Role and Responsibilities

The writer was in her fourth year of teaching at this particular preschool center. The role and responsibility of the teacher was to provide a safe, secure, and healthy developmentally appropriate learning environment whereby students may progress from one developmental stage to the next at their own rates and in their own times. Attaining social skills through a cognitively-based approach was the main goal of this preschool program. The teacher was viewed as an extension of the home role models and worked in partnership with the parents. The responsibilities of the teacher included being a facilitator of learning and providing any necessary medical and/or dental visits for the children. Recognizing that the parent was the child's most influential teacher, the teacher worked closely with children's families by making visits periodically to their homes. Since the

writer attempted to work closely with the parents, any social services that a family needed were directed towards the social services coordinator by the teacher. The writer viewed her position as a privilege bestowed upon her by the parents who had entrusted her with the welfare and education of their children during the most productive hours of the day

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

The inability of parents to recognize their extraordinary impact on the development of literacy in their children greatly contributed to their children being at-risk for learning. Lack of education, teen-age pregnancies, single-parent homes with absent fathers, little or no job opportunities, socioeconomic constraints, governmental policies which do not support families, irresponsible behavior, ignorance, violence, drugs, discrimination, and apathy have negatively influenced the development of these children, their parents, and society. Parents who have not completed their education may harbor painful memories that the school setting was not a welcoming place. Therefore, they did not support nor felt comfortable reading or working on educational activities with their children at home. Children, whose parents did not support education at home, were not respectful of the benefits of education and literacy, and developed a disrespectful attitude towards authority figures.

As the writer initially began working with this population of children, she was amazed to find how overwhelmed the children were by books. The children acted as if they had very little or no prior experience or knowledge that books existed. Many children became totally captivated with the book covers, and could not progress beyond to

the pages of the books. This discovery by the writer alerted her that these children had little or no prior literacy experiences. During informal conversations with the writer, the children indicated that they had little or no books at home, and were seldom read to by adults. Children also indicated that they did not have writing materials in their home. As one child stated, "My Mamma ain't got no paper and writing stuff."

In addition, the writer discovered that many of the students came to school lacking not only literacy experiences, but also social skills, personal hygiene skills, language skills, and experiential learning skills. The students indicated a lack of respect for adults, authority, and peers by using verbal and physical abuse to solve problems. These children were entering school deficient in academic and social skills.

During parent interviews and home visits, the writer found many parents were not only socioeconomically disadvantaged, but also lacking education, parenting skills, experiential learning skills, reading and writing materials, and an awareness of their impact as role models on the development of their children. Many parents felt that their responsibilities and impact as parents ended once their children entered school. As one parent indicated, "... from 8 to 3 she's yours, from 3 to 8, she's mine."

Many parents brought friends or relatives to help them complete enrollment papers, indicating a lack of literacy skills. During the school year, parents enjoyed participating in field trip activities with their children. The writer discovered that many parents had little or no prior experiential learning outside their immediate rural environments, and eagerly anticipated field trip experiences. In fact, during a field trip to the airport, parents strongly expressed a desire for the "wing pins" generally given to children by the airline. However,

there seemed to be an apathy towards parental involvement in the school. Although workshops, parent-child activities, home visits, and an "open door" policy existed to encourage parent participation in and between the classroom and the home, many parents were never seen during the entire school year. For example, one parent appeared during the Christmas holidays only to collect her child's toys, which had been donated to the school by a local department store. She would not stay for her child's Christmas party.

As the writer visited the homes of the students during home visits, parents indicated that they did not have the time, transportation, resources, materials, or space to engage in literacy activities with their children. Many of the families indicated that they did not feel very comfortable or competent participating in "school things" at home. Clearly, these families were not aware of their impact as role models on the development of their children. They felt that these kinds of activities were best left to those who were better trained to do so. The writer saw very few books, magazines, newspapers, and/or writing materials available in the homes. The majority of the homes visited had none of these materials available. Computers were not available in any of the homes visited. An example of the "survival mechanism" observed by the writer in one of the homes visited was a parent who had turned on all the stove burners to provide heat for her family on a very cold day.

Specifically, parents did not have the resources or literacy skills necessary to support the emergent literacy development of their children at home. The problem was students were exiting the Head Start Program without the literacy background necessary to be successful in kindergarten.

Problem Documentation

Students were lacking the literacy skills and experiences required for future school success. Using an oral survey while conducting home visits, 15 of 20 families indicated that they did not have the time, resources, or transportation to provide reading and writing materials or experiences for their children at home. Families indicated that books, magazines, newspapers, and writing materials were expensive and unaffordable. In their rural setting, there was no public transportation available for them. Parents indicated that time was scarce, since the majority were single-parents working several low-paying jobs or had younger siblings to care for during the day. Therefore, there was little opportunity for families to participate in or provide literacy experiences for their children at home.

Families seemed to be unaware of their importance nor felt competent to engage their children in literacy activities at home. Using an oral survey while conducting home visits, 18 of 20 families indicated that they felt "somewhat" confident reading to their children. Parents indicated that they felt that school personnel would be more effective in engaging their children in literacy activities.

The families and the students were not participating in literacy activities using computer technology. Using an oral survey while conducting home visits, all 20 families indicated that they did not own nor had access to a computer. Many families indicated that computers "scared" them. Although some families explained that they had participated in computer technology while in high school, they still felt uncomfortable using them.

Scores obtained from the preschool readiness instrument indicated 18 of 20 students

were developmentally 2 or more years below their chronological age equivalent on entering the preschool program. In fact, 4 of the 20 were developmentally 3 or more years below their chronological age equivalent. These results indicated a significant lack of experiential and literacy background.

Scores obtained from the kindergarten screening instrument placed 12 of 20 students into developmental kindergarten, rather than in kindergarten, after exiting the Head Start Program. Although the students' preschool screening instrument results had improved at the completion of their Head Start experience, their scores had not improved sufficiently to place them into kindergarten. These placements indicated that parental involvement and support in their children's literacy development, while working in partnership with the teacher, was necessary for their children to be successful in kindergarten.

There was little evidence to indicate parental involvement in the preschool setting. Attendance records indicated that an average of 3 of 20 parents attended workshops regularly throughout the year. In fact, the same 3 parents attended the workshops for most of the school year. Also, 10 of the 20 children were cared for by adults other than their parents. Many of these children were cared for by their grandparents, distant relatives, or friends. These adults cared for many children and indicated that they were too old and/or were unable to participate in the school setting.

Eligibility for enrollment into this preschool program required that families provided documented proof of the family income. This proof substantiated that the families were socioeconomically disadvantaged.

Documentation required for registration into this program showed that only 5 of 20

children were from "intact families", with both a mother and a father living in the home. Of the 20 families surveyed, 15 children were from single-female headed households. Oral interviews of the parents of these 15 children indicated that these children had little or no support (financial or otherwise) or contact with their fathers. Documentation also indicated that three-fourths of the parents had not completed their high school education nor received a GED, resulting in deficient educational and literacy skills.

Causative Analysis

Clearly, family life, as we know it, has radically changed over the years. The poorest population in America today is its children. Many impoverished children, who are at-risk for learning, are from single-female headed households. Low-income families struggle each day just to survive. Crowded housing and financial constraints leave little space or money for toys, books, and writing materials. Low-income parents, who are holding down one or more low-paying jobs, do not have the time, energy, expertise, or resources to become involved with the literacy development of their young children. Many low-income parents who are lacking education, do not feel comfortable in an educational setting, and may harbor unhappy memories of their past experiences. Therefore, their involvement in their children's school setting may be limited because they may still view school as unwelcoming place.

Lack of parental education combined with a lack of literacy experiences denies children the literacy role models in the home so necessary for their emergent literacy development. Young children require the support of their families to be successful in any school setting. When that support is denied and/or ignored, for whatever reason, the child

cannot be as successful as those children whose parents are supportive. Although parents were concerned about the welfare of their children, they were not aware of their responsibilities and impact as literacy role models on the development of their children.

In the writer's work setting, students arrived in school lacking experiential learning and literacy skills. Since the children came from rural environments, their first day of preschool was the first time many had traveled outside their home environments. Children were also arriving without the social skills necessary to participate successfully in every day life experiences. The lack of public transportation combined with a lack of financial resources resulted in children deficient in experiential learning and literacy experiences.

Although parents were clearly concerned with their children's welfare, they were not aware of their impact as role models on the emergent literacy development of their children. Many parents believed their responsibilities for their children's education ended once their children entered school. Since the majority of the families were headed by single females, male role models involved in literacy experiences were also limited for these children. Financial constraints, crowded and inadequate public housing, limited parental education, low-paying or no job opportunities, domestic violence, and crime contributed to the at-risk status of the children.

In the past, parents have actually engaged in physical violence on school grounds directly in front of the children. The murder of a student's mother was found to be drug-related. Perhaps education, experiential learning, adequate job opportunities, and literacy competency could have been helpful in avoiding these kinds of conflicts which were so devastating to the development of young children and to society.

Since eligibility into this program required that the children's families be low-income, financial constraints were a major cause for parents not being able to provide the literacy materials and experiences for their children at home. Parents did not have the time, energy, skills, or resources necessary to engage in literacy experiences with their children. Making ends meet was a daily battle for them. In addition, the majority of the parents had not completed high school. Many were illiterate or below-level in their literacy skills. Some may have had unhappy and unsuccessful experiences in a school setting and have not forgotten those painful memories. Therefore, education and those engaged in it were not supported or respected by the parents. Also, many had children as teenagers and had not been able to complete their education.

Parental involvement in the school setting was extremely limited. The majority of the parents perceived school as an unwelcoming place. The children of these parents did not have the support at home necessary for them to be successful in the school setting or the encouragement needed to enhance their emergent literacy development.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Although it is commonly accepted that the family is the "backbone" of society, it is "old news" that its traditional characteristics have dramatically changed during the last two decades. Particularly during the 1990's, the "traditional" family where the father worked outside the home and the mother worked within the home caring for the children has lost its majority status. Today, the majority can be characterized as being families where both parents work outside the home and the children are cared for by others for a large portion of the day. These families, combined with the increase of single-parent families, provide

little time or energy for parents to interact and support their children (Heath & McLaughlin, 1987). More and more, families are relying on the school system to not only educate, but to parent and discipline their children.

The causes for these changes are many and complex. During the 1950's and '60's, technology and automation drastically reduced the number of jobs for blue-collar workers in cities, particularly for Black families. Today, black unemployment is twice that of whites (Raspberry, 1993). This has caused Black-American females to become disenchanted with the Black-American male as a marriage partner, provider, and father. Although the feminist movement has had some effect on the increase in the number of women working outside the home, the main reason is purely economic. The results of these events combined with a change in attitude towards lifestyles in the country, have resulted in fatherless families becoming the largest segment of poverty in today's society, for both white and minority families.

Contributing to the problems of teenage pregnancies, illegitimate births, fatherless homes, and poverty are "anti-family" public policy programs. Saunders (1993) has stated that government policy has had responsibility contributing to the increase in single-parent households. She cites statistics in California which showed that 1 of 15 teenage girls had a baby out of wedlock in 1992, and 1 in 4 had already given birth to at least one other child. She quotes State Department of Social Services Director Elaine Anderson who characterizes this phenomenon as "false emancipation." Aid to Families of Dependent Children (AFDC) along with changes in cultural attitudes, encourages single-parenthood status by providing teenagers with an apartment, or as Saunders calls it "teen-age

independence". Saunders cites statistics which show that in 1987, 54% of AFDC recipients were in their teens when having their first child. Half of these teenagers are still dependent after 5 years. Beck (1993) suggests that these policies and attitudes can be changed by objectively looking at the harm they cause. He states,

> There is no way government or social agencies or extended families or welfare payments or schools or even the all-out efforts of single mothers can make up to a child for the lack of a good father. What children need most, second only to a good mother, is a good, legal father. (p. B-7)

The number of children living in poverty (all children) is 1 in 4, with deadly estimates of 10,000 children dying from its effects as of 1991 (Children's Defense Fund, 1992). In a paper presented in New Orleans, Greg Duncan (1993) of the University of Michigan stated that children living in persistent poverty have IQ's which are 9.1 points lower by age 5. He further states that persistent poverty, more than the mother's education, ethnic origin, and being fatherless contributes to the reduction of the child's IQ. Children living in poverty suffer negative effects including poor health, low birth weights, emotional and behavioral problems, and arriving in school "at-risk" for learning (Beck, 1993).

Bluestein (1991) has found that the educational level of disadvantaged parents highly correlated with serious life events, such as death, resulting in their being at greater risk for child abuse and dysfunctional parenting. Single mothers of Head Start children and their families often are unaware of their children's competencies and tend to model inappropriate behaviors (Leik & Chalkley, 1989). Wilfer and Breidkamp (1990) have stated that the poor life conditions of the increased number of children living in poverty

have eliminated the opportunities for these children to learn effectively. They state, "Children start life ready to learn, the lives they live enhance or restrict their potential" (p. 23).

Comparing the rural-urban status of single-parent female-headed households living in poverty, Cautley (1989) found that single mothers living in small towns and rural areas would experience levels of poverty as high or higher than single mothers living in urban or major city areas. Michael (1990) cites national statistics indicating that small rural schools tend to have very few, if any, parent participation. Heath (1983) has suggested that low-income minorities, such as rural, southern African-American families are less inclined to read books with their young children than are middle-class families.

Mavrogenes (1990) and Toomey (1992) state that low-income parents are very concerned with their children's education, but their feelings of incompetence and being at a loss to know how they can be helpful in their children's education causes them to feel uncomfortable, distrustful, and insecure in school situations. Furthermore, low-income family members of at-risk children do not have the money, time, and/or competencies necessary to support their children's educational endeavors in the home (Holland, 1987). Reynolds (1989) conducted a study indicating that low-income, minority students who had attended an intervention preschool program and whose parents were not involved in school, did not do as well as students whose parents were involved. Two more reasons why low-income parents do not participate in parent programs are that parents change jobs often, and, families move frequently to new locations (Johnson & Breckenridge, 1981).

During its formative stages, Comer (1991) found many obstacles while establishing a school intervention preschool program at Yale's Child Study Center. Although a strong liaison between school and home is one of the most important connections in a young child's development, Comer found parents feeling uncomfortable and unwelcomed in the school setting, and the staff feeling parents were apathetic towards their children's progress. Goldenberg (1989) explains that the frequency of teacher contact with low-income, minority parents is limited, since teachers believe these parents are overwhelmed with societal problems and are incapable of supporting their children's education.

The cost of illiteracy in our society is devastating. Forty-three percent of those living in poverty are on the lowest reading level and their weekly earning rates are reduced by $410 per week (Sagan & Druyan, 1994). Although there are many preventive programs to help at-risk children acquire the language skills necessary for reading, France and Hager (1993) have found that these preventive measures are diminished when the literacy skills of the parents are limited. In fact, illiterate parents are the hardest group to encourage their at-risk children to become involved in a family reading program (Bauernfeind, 1990). Campbell (1990) has found that illiterate parents who may not feel welcome in the school setting, lack the educational background necessary to support their children, and were also the hardest group to persuade to be involved in reading activities with their young children. The United Nations (1991) has reported that two-thirds of the world's population who are illiterate are women, and, as a result are unable to foster literacy in their children.

Young children who grow up in a household where there are no reading and writing

adult role models, and who are not read to, will arrive in school at-risk for their emergent literacy development. McCormick and Mason (1989) suggest that young children who do not engage in reading activities with their parents are at greater risk for reading failure in school. Mason and Allen (1986) have also acknowledged that young children who do not regularly engage in reading and writing activities with their parents will enter school different from their peers who do.

According to Tuantin, Wright, and Thouvenelle (1989), advantaged families and their young children are arriving in school familiar with the functions and benefits derived from computer technology. However, low-income families and their children are arriving in school unaware of the benefits computer technology can bring.

Those in the field of education and intervention programs are all too aware that they, by themselves, cannot "fix" the problem of illiteracy which stems from poverty and its effects. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops (1992) stated,

> No government policy can love a child and no policy can substitute for a family's care. (But) government can either support or undermine families as they cope with the moral, social, and economic stresses of caring for children. . . . The undeniable fact is that our children's future is shaped both by the values of their parents and the policies of our nation. (p. 25)

Disadvantaged preschool students who have participated in intervention programs, such as Project Head Start, may still arrive in school at-risk for learning. In a study conducted by Ulmer (1991), Head Start parents were found to be inadequately prepared to support their children's transition from preschool into public school. Factors including

limited parental involvement, retention, and school mobility (movement from school to school) have diminished the effects of intervention preschool programs on school achievement (Reynolds, 1990). Lee (1989) found that the effects of Project Head Start were greatest immediately after exiting the program, but particularly diminished for below average initial-entry children in kindergarten and first grade. Shipman's (1981) investigation of children's first school experiences after exiting the Head Start Program concluded that achievement declined when students did not have the support of their families. The strains on disadvantaged families can eliminate the gains children acquire in Head Start programs (Collins, 1993). In fact, Boyer (1991) states that the Carnegie Foundation issued a report indicating that 35% of all children are arriving in kindergarten without the skills necessary to be successful.

Zigler (1993) has acknowledged that although intervention programs have been operating for 30 years, poverty in America has increased. He states that intervention programs, such as Project Head Start are well-researched. However, they are less effective due to many factors, including limited parental involvement and, their effects do not extend beyond the preschool setting. Rich (1991) points out that at the 1990 International Conference on Children and Youth At Risk, held in Washington, researchers reiterated that schools cannot solve the problems of "at-risk" children alone. Involvement of parents, families, and the community must be included in the overall strategy.

Although there has been a renewed interest in the effectiveness of home visits recently, their potential for producing positive results in children's development has not yet been realized. Furthermore, Powell (1990) states that even though home visiting can

be informative for both families and school staff, it cannot solve all the social ills of the society. According to *Zigler* (1990), "No amount of home visits will take the place of jobs that provide decent incomes, affordable housing, appropriate health care, optimal family configurations, or integrated neighborhoods where children encounter positive role models" (p. viii).

In conclusion, the changes in the family structure during the last two decades have resulted in fatherless families becoming the largest segment of poverty in today's society. The effects on children living in poverty include a reduction in IQ, poor health, low birth weights, emotional and social problems, and arriving in school "at-risk" for learning. Although low-income families are very concerned about their children's education, they are unaware of their impact as reading role models on the emergent literacy development of their young children and lack the skills necessary to support their children's education. Low-income parents also feel uncomfortable and unwelcomed in the school setting, while teachers feel that parents are apathetic towards their children's progress. Long-lasting effects of preventive programs for at-risk children are diminished when the literacy skills of their parents are limited.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The writer proposed the following goals and outcomes for this practicum.

The first goal of this practicum states that students will exit the Head Start Program with the literacy background necessary to be successful in kindergarten.

The second goal of this practicum states that Head Start parents will work in partnership with teachers in supporting the literacy development of their children to be successful in kindergarten.

Expected Outcomes

At the conclusion of the implementation period, there were six expected outcomes for this practicum.

Outcome 1. 18 of 20 families will participate in literacy activities with their children. This outcome will be measured by a Parent Survey (see Appendix A).

Outcome 2. 18 of 20 families will participate in computer literacy activities with their children. This outcome will be measured by a Parent Computer Lab Log (see Appendix B).

Outcome 3. 18 of 20 families will feel "more" confident reading to their children. This outcome will be measured by a Parent Survey (see Appendix A).

Outcome 4: 18 of 20 students will be developmentally 1 year or less below their chronological age when exiting the preschool program. This outcome will be measured by a preschool readiness instrument.

Outcome 5: 12 of 20 students will be placed in kindergarten, rather than into developmental kindergarten. This outcome will be measured by a kindergarten screening instrument.

Outcome 6: 10 of 20 parents will attend workshops regularly throughout the year. This outcome will be measured by a Parent Workshop Log (see Appendix C).

Measurement of Outcomes

The standard of achievement for Outcome 1 will be a positive score on 7 of 8 items on the Parent Survey (see Appendix A). The written survey uses a Likert Scale for parents to respond. To assist parents and to provide parents access to the writer, this survey will be administered to parents, individually, during home visits. Following the implementation period, the writer will tabulate the results of the Parent Survey.

The standard of achievement for Outcome 2 will be 18 parents participating in computer literacy activities with their children 5 times during the implementation period. Parents will sign a weekly Parent Computer Log (see Appendix B) as they engage their children in computer literacy activities. These logs will be tabulated and their results identified.

The standard of achievement for Outcome 3 will be 18 parents indicating a positive score on Item 8 on the Parent Survey (see Appendix A). This written survey uses a Likert Scale for parents to respond. To assist parents and to provide parents access to the

writer, this survey will be administered to parents, individually, during home visits. The writer will tabulate the results of the survey.

The standard of achievement for Outcome 4 will be 18 students being developmentally 1 year or less below their chronological age when exiting the preschool program as measured by the Daberon-2 Screening for School Readiness (Danzer, Gerber, Lyons, & Voress, 1991) instrument. The screening will be administered to students at the conclusion of the implementation period and is required by the school system. The results of the screening instrument will be tabulated and the findings reported.

The standard for Outcome 5 will be 12 students placed on a list who have been recommended for kindergarten. The writer will receive a list with the names of the students who have been recommended for kindergarten from the primary schools. However, during the implementation period, the school district abolished the developmental kindergarten classrooms and replaced them with regular kindergarten classrooms. The writer was to receive a list with the names of students who had been identified for kindergarten success by the kindergarten teachers.

The standard of achievement for Outcome 6 will be a positive score on an oral survey (see Appendix D) of 18 students able to distinguish printed words from illustrations in books read to the students by their parents selected from the Classroom-Home Library. The writer will administer the survey to each student individually at the conclusion of the implementation period and tabulate the results.

An analysis of the outcomes of this practicum will be presented after the compilation of the data has been completed. These data will be derived from the oral and written surveys, attendance records, assessment scores, and placement rosters.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The problem to be solved in this practicum was students were exiting the Head Start Program without the literacy background necessary to be successful in kindergarten. While searching the literature for solution strategies, the writer found that this problem is very complex and solution strategies have been tried in many parts of the country. Spewock (1991) has identified a program established in rural Pennsylvania which incorporated the services of the local hospital, pediatricians, and the postal service. This program, designed by the district's preschool staff, distributed "Learning Packets" free of charge to parents, from the time a child was born until the child was eligible to enter school. These packets contained information concerning parenting, child development, and language development. Simply by filling out a postcard and mailing it, parents could become part of this program. The emphasis of this program was to promote early literacy in children by parents reading to them at home.

The creators of this program also indicated that these packets promoted the enjoyment and relaxation that literacy experiences can bring to families. This program has been successful for more than 300 families for over six years. These packets were also successfully used by parents in conjunction with the Home-Based Preschool Parent

Training Program (Spenock, 1988)

Another successful program increasing parental involvement was the parents' program at the Mildred Magowan School in Edgewater Park, New Jersey (Galen, 1991). This school, in 1988, was designated as a model school in the "Parents as Partners in Learning" project. This community was mostly farmland, multicultural, with the majority of children's parents working outside the home. This program recognized that parents may feel ill at ease participating in their children's education at home or in the school setting. In promoting parent participation, this program incorporated the recommendations of the National Association of State Boards of Education (1988), which included recognizing that the setting where parents were valued as the main influences in their children's lives was critical for the development of children, parents' self-esteem was crucial for the development of children, parents must be included in decisions concerning early childhood education, access to the educational environment of their children by parents was promoted, and, continuous communication between parents and school staff was essential for the development of children.

This parent involvement program began gradually over ten years ago. One of the unique components of this program was the recognition that some parents may not be able to come to the school setting, but could participate at home. By supporting and participating in parent-child activities at home, supplied by the school (and created with parent input), such as reading with their children, parents would still be participating in the education of their children. This program and the "Learning Packets" program provided reading materials and activities for parents to use at home with their children. Another

result of this program was a renewed respect for teachers by the parents.

Powell (1986) has suggested that it may not be realistic to expect all parents to participate in educational activities at home/or in the school setting. The life situations parents contend with on a daily basis may be beyond the scope of a school program. Moreover, Powell points out that a program that may be effective for a single suburban career mother may not be effective for a poor, single mother in a rural area, or a single father in the big city. These findings would suggest that an effective program must be sensitive and respectful of the living circumstances of parents.

Successful programs, such as the Child and Family Resource Program (Travers, Nauta, & Irwin, 1982), and the Yale Child Welfare Project (Seitz, Rosenbaum, & Apfel, 1985), found positive short- and long-term results by providing "support for" rather than "education of" impoverished parents. These two programs provided parents and children with a large range of social, medical, and family services. These findings suggest that an effective parental participation program was dependent upon a school climate established out of respect and support for parents to feel comfortable participating in school-related activities.

Wrobleski (1990), a teacher of young children, answered parents' requests for parent-child activities at home by supplying a "writer's briefcase" for her students. Recognizing that children may not have writing materials at home, she provided the materials and activities for students to participate with their parents at home. The results of this project were very positive. Parents and children expressed enjoyment and anticipation of this project. She is creating parent-child activities with supplies for art and

math for the future. Helm (1994) has created a "Family Theme Bag" approach, which provided a clown doll in a bag, along with a journal, a storybook, and family activities on cards to be taken home by a child for a few days visit. The purpose for this approach was to emphasize and assist parents in recognizing their importance in the emergent literacy development of their children.

MacCarry (1989) described a parent-child literacy project whose goal was to provide quality literacy experiences between the parent and child at home. The population targeted for this project was very low-income homes where few, if any, books were available. The families of these children traditionally excluded books from their daily lives. This project provided books to children who were viewed as highly unlikely to ever visit a library. This project created a school-based library whereby children and parents could check-out books on a daily basis, similar to a regular library.

Fractor, Woodruff, Martinez, and Teale (1993), have stated that effective reading habits and the enjoyment of reading is first learned by children in the home. Therefore, if there are few or no books available in the home, children will not learn to enjoy reading books. By establishing an effective classroom library, Fractor et al acknowledged that daily accessibility to books can be stimulating for all young readers. They feel that a quality classroom library can not only contribute to a child's level of reading ability, but also result in a child's reading for pleasure and for information. Gottschall (1995) recommends that the classroom library provide a variety of multicultural books with which children and their families can relate.

Lancy and Nattiv (1992) identified a successful Parent-Assisted Early Reading

Program established in the Sunrise School, Utah. This program served a small farming community in a state where the birthrate was the highest in the country, and where spending on education was the lowest. The goal of this program was to increase parent participation in schools using books. This program presented workshops for parents to participate in a very informal reading activities. These workshops were designed to train parents and grandparents to read to young children. This program was enthusiastically received. Parents would come to school and read to only two children in the classroom's reading corner. Parents volunteered for 90 minutes a day, 5 days a week. To purchase books for the classrooms, the program received a grant which bought books and a loveseat for the book corners. The parents were very excited about this program, but the children responded even more enthusiastically. This project resulted in a library funded by the school's PTA fund-raising projects after the grant money had been exhausted. The program was able to increase its number of volunteers from 6 to 45. In 1990, the National Council of Teachers of English identified Sunrise School as a "Center of Excellence for Students-At-Risk."

Barclay and Widmer (1992) stated that song lyrics are a natural transition between reading and writing in the language arts. Young children easily identify with songs, and their lyrics promote early literacy development. Song picture books, which are also well-known songs, such as "There Was an Old Lady", are meaningful and memorable for young emergent readers. Parents of young children can also easily relate to song picture books, and may find these kinds of books easier to read with their children at home. These kinds of books are comprised of words and lyrics that are familiar and predictable

for both children and parents. Using picture books may help parents feel more at ease reading books at home with their children.

As Rich (1991) has explained, with the current change in family structures, parents are unaware of their impact on the development of their children. She stated that educators need to reach beyond schools and families to the whole community to produce positive developmental skills in children. The goal of her program, called Tennessee Megaskills, was to implement an educational support system from businesses and the community, so that parents can reinforce and support educational skills at home. When businesses and the community are committed to education, parents begin to recognize the importance of education. The support given to children, their families, and their schools by the businesses and the community can be perceived by parents as a nonthreatening, encouraging message that parents are the prominent influence in their child's development. Results of this community project, resulted in an increase of parents spending at least 14 minutes a day in educational activities with their children. Another result of this program was parents and children were enjoying the experience together. In fact, Strickland and Taylor (1989) have acknowledged that the experience of sharing a book with a caring adult enables the child to associate books with feelings of enjoyment and love. The voluntary act of sharing books with others can dramatically affect the literacy development of young children (Sulzby & Teale, 1989).

Vrance and Hager (1993) have noted that although there are those who believe that workshops for parents will prevent children from experiencing literacy difficulties, this position is unwarranted when parents are deficient in their literacy skills. Parents who

have learned the skill of reading aloud to their children through effective workshops have been most successful in promoting the emergent literacy development of their children. Children who are read aloud to often have a better understanding of story constructions (Holdaway, 1979). The process of hearing books read aloud to them provides children with the opportunity to realize that books can identify with their innermost feelings and meaningful life experiences (Gottschall, 1995). In their long-term study of high-risk children, Werner and Smith (1992) found that one of the most "potent predictors" of becoming a responsible, successful adult was the acquisition of effective reading skills by fourth grade. As stated by Schickedanz, Schickedanz, Hansen, and Forsyth (1993), "All the evidence suggests that hearing and responding to stories read from books is probably the most important literacy experience a preschooler can have" (p. 364).

Mavrogenes (1990) stated that literacy activities require "time, attention, and sensitivity rather than money." She recommended that effective workshops for low-income families include demonstrations, actual practice, and discussion, rather than sending home printed literacy activities for parents to do with their children at home.

The Intergenerational Reading Project cited by France and Hager is an example of providing effective workshops for parents who are limited in literacy skills. This project targeted low-income, black families. Parents were encouraged to attend six, one-hour weekly workshops with their children. At these sessions, parents read predictable stories aloud to their children. Parent-child activities were also supplied for parents to use at home with their children between workshops. France (1991) found that this project resulted in an overall improvement in student achievement in listening comprehension for

these low-income, minority students. This project recognized the need to implement a literacy project for parents that would be cost-effective. Therefore, costs associated with this project were limited to reproduction of materials and donation of time by the faculty and staff.

Having established this project in over half the schools in Norfolk's school district, project planners have come to realize that the success of the project is directly dependent upon its relationship with parents. They have identified three principles to promote a successful relationship between school and home, which were: Recruit, Respect, and Respond.

As with Rich's (1991) observations, France and Hager agreed with the coordinators of this project that when parents realize their importance in the development of their children and are shown the respect necessary for them to participate with educators in that development, parents feel more comfortable and welcome. Greenberg (1989) stated that many times the parental apathy teachers identify applies not only to low-income parents, but to middle and upper-class parents, too. Often these parents do not feel that they or their talents are welcome in the school setting. However, she has discovered that by supporting an intense family participation program, educators can increase students' self-esteem, stimulate learning, and reduce discipline problems. Wise early childhood educators involved in intervention programs have known for a very long time, that the child's family is the most impactful influence in a child's life (Gage & Workman, 1994).

Powell (1986) suggested that parent programs, such as the Yale Child Welfare Project, which provided social, medical, and child services, and, continue beyond the

preschool years have had positive, long-term results on the development of their children.

School systems are clearly becoming aware that effective intervention programs must include an intense parent-participation component. Curry (1990) identified an intervention program, Missouri's Parents as First Teachers Project (Winter, 1986), as one which interacts with parents and their newborns through first grade. Furthermore, a quality preschool program, such as the High/Scope Curriculum Approach (Hohmann, Banet, & Weikart, 1979)which includes an effective parental-involvement component, contributed to increased skills in first grade (Frede & Barnett, 1992). Delaney and Finger (1991) have found that literacy activities for disadvantaged families were more effective when the activities focused on adult-child interactions, rather than focusing only on the child or on the adult.

Clements, Nastasi, and Swaminathan (1993) have found that by providing young children and their families opportunities to become skillful in computer technology, they were better able to communicate, cooperate, and become more proficient in their literacy skills. They have also found that computer activities used at home and in school can increase problem-solving skills, creative abilities, and can heighten math achievement for preschoolers and into grade school. Tsantis, Wright, and Thouvenelle (1989) have observed that Head Start children involved in computer technology have increased their self-esteem and self-confidence. They have also found that parental involvement in computer technology in school and at home can promote the skills necessary for students to be successful in kindergarten.

Butzin (1992) stated that all parents want their children to be computer literate and

to be competent in a technology-based society. She recommended that effective computer competencies for children be rooted in parent education and practice. Wright, Shade, Thouvenelle, and Davidson (1989) recommended computer use by students, parents, and teachers to enhance the social, emotional, language, cognitive, and physical development of the preschool child.

The transition from preschool to kindergarten is a major change in the life of a child. Maxwell and Eller (1994) suggested that to establish a smooth transition into kindergarten, parents, preschool teachers, kindergarten teachers, and upper-grade teachers meet to discuss and identify the skills and expectations for kindergarten. The skills acquired in kindergarten will determine the expectations for upper grade levels. They also suggested that school administrators allow time for kindergarten teachers to visit the preschool settings to observe and share information about the "future kindergartners" in a collaborative effort to ensure a smoother transition for the students, their families, and their teachers. Greene (1993) and Ulmer (1991) have found that establishing a positive transition program from Head Start into kindergarten should be helpful in maintaining the effects of the intervention program into kindergarten. Meier (1992) has also recommended that Head Start improve the quality of its program by refining and incorporating literacy skills, parental involvement, and computer skills along with its emphasis on socialization to ensure preschoolers of a smoother transition into kindergarten.

Description of Selected Solutions

The literature has clearly spoken to the need for an intense parental involvement component in the literacy development of preschool children from disadvantaged homes for them to be successful in kindergarten (Meier, 1992, Zigler, 1993). A comprehensive family literacy project which was mindful and respectful of the knowledge that a child's family is the most impactful influence on that child's life (Gage & Workman, 1994) was created. Therefore, solutions generated from the literature combined with solutions created by the writer that would be effective in the writer's work setting and in the homes of the students were plausible and were successful with certain modifications. Many of the projects and programs cited targeted low-income, minority families living in rural areas. The entire project was cost-effective for both the parents and the writer, as recommended by France (1991). Attendance and participation records were maintained throughout and preparations were made for each workshop.

Providing parents with activities to use at home in rural areas (Lancy & Nattiv, 1992) with their children as in the "Learning Packets" program cited by Spewock (1991), combined with books to be taken home from the classroom library, as identified by Fractor, Woodruff, Martinez, and Teale (1993) and MacCarry (1989), provided families and their children with the resources and activities necessary to support the literacy development of their children at home. Supplying students with their own "writer's suitcase" for them to transport the books, activities, and the reading and writing materials between school and home, also provided parents and their children with the convenience and the supplies necessary to participate in the literacy activities suggested by Spewock

(1991). These solutions eliminated the need for transportation for those families who work and/or were not able to participate in the school setting while establishing a warm, close liaison between school and home and between parent and child. Providing children and their families with a variety of multicultural books with which to identify was an important and effective component of the Home-Classroom Library (Gottschall, 1995). Students and families began to associate the book reading experience with feelings of love and enjoyment (Strickland & Taylor, 1989).

By establishing and conducting literacy workshops that were enjoyable, hands-on, take-home, and welcoming, and which focused primarily on adult-child interactions, as suggested by Mavrogenes (1990), Barclay and Walwer (1992), and Delaney and Finger (1991), the writer was able to provide parents with meaningful, effective literacy experiences for themselves and their children in the school setting. Workshop topics, such as the effectiveness and importance of parents reading aloud to children and being reading role models as cited by France and Hager (1993), how to read aloud with children as cited by Mavrogenes (1990), and, creating, singing, and reading song picture books, as cited by Barclay and Walwer (1992), were meaningful and effective topics for workshops. When parents created these kinds of books, they were also building home libraries. All workshops included an affective component, such as activities to relax participants and included demonstrations, practice, and feedback, as recommended by Mavrogenes (1990).

Implementing a "Home Friend" component, which was actually a stuffed animal who was allowed to go home with students to spend the night, provided families with reading and writing activities with their children, similar to the "Family Theme Bags" activity

suggested by Helm (1994). Within the suitcase were a pair of pajamas and slippers, a journal containing entries of visits and experiences written at the homes of the students with their families, and a short story-letter introducing the "Home Friend" to families.

The writer recruited parents to read with the students in the book center so that they would become more confident reading aloud to children. This component also provided an opportunity for the children to engage in reading experiences with parents at school as suggested by Lancy and Nattiv (1992).

So that parents and children engaged in literacy and math activities together at home, the writer created a Can Collection Project which required parents and their children to count and collect used aluminum cans. The cans were collected at the school setting and were redeemed for money at the local community can recycling center. The money collected was used to contribute to the purchase of a wheelchair for a disabled child. The children and their families wrote letters to the disabled child during the implementation of this component. This activity provided an opportunity for the families to engage in counting and literacy activities within their homes, while providing them with a sense of community by participating in a project to help those who were less fortunate.

A computer lab for parents to engage in literacy activities with their children was created. Together, parents and their children created books and projects to be taken home and enjoyed by the children's families. This component promoted the literacy and math development of the children through technology, as suggested by Tsantis, Wright, and Thouvenelle (1989); Wright, Shade, Thouvenelle, and Davidson (1989); Clements, Nastasi, and Swaminathan (1993); and, Mobius Corporation (1990).

A transition program for students and their families to experience a smoother transition into the kindergarten setting of their primary schools was created as suggested by Greene (1993), Meier (1992), and Ulmer (1991). Students and families participated in a workshop and toured the kindergarten in the primary school setting. Information of concern to the children and families was provided. In addition, school packets of pertinent information were given to parents.

Report of Action Taken

The following will describe the implementation process in detail. This practicum was comprised of six components, which included a Classroom-Home Library, a Home-Friend Project, Parent Literacy Workshops, a Can Collection Project, a Parent-Child Computer Lab, and, a Parent-Reading Volunteers Project. Attendance records were maintained throughout and preparations were made for each workshop. The program required 8 months to implement.

The Parent Literacy Workshop component of the practicum was well-supported by parents. Relying on the suggestions of Delaney and Finger (1991), the writer provided literacy workshops for disadvantaged families which focused on activities involving adult-child interactions, rather than focusing only on the child or on the adult. Furthermore, the writer was aware that there are those who believe that workshops for parents will prevent children from experiencing literacy difficulties. However, as stated by France and Hager (1993), this position is unwarranted when parents are deficient in their literacy skills. Therefore, workshops for disadvantaged families included demonstrations, parent-child interactions, actual practice, and discussion, rather than sending home printed activities for

parents to do with their children at home (Mavrogenes, 1990). The writer always provided simple prizes, food, and beverages for all participating adults at the workshops.

Seven Parent Workshops were conducted during the implementation period. The topics of the workshops included an Introduction to the Family Literacy Project, The Importance and Demonstration of Reading Aloud to Preschool Children, Storytelling, Rice Babies, Song Picture Books, Presentation of Funds Collected to the Disabled Child, and, Tour of and Transition into Kindergarten.

To begin the project, an introductory workshop to the program for parents was held. Parents had received an invitation followed by a reminder to attend the first workshop. The workshop was held to inform parents of the various components of the program, and their roles in its implementation. A packet containing a calendar and an introduction explaining the program components was distributed to parents. Sign-up sheets for the Parent-Child Computer Lab and for the Reading Volunteers were completed by the parents. Refreshments were served and attendance prizes awarded. The introductory packet was sent to parents who had not attended, followed by a phone call.

Following the first workshop, students began decorating their "writer's briefcases" to accommodate their books, activities, and writing materials for the Home-Classroom Library component. Their "briefcases" were laminated for durability. Students were required to bring their regular school bags to school daily to transport and protect their "briefcases". Parents were informed of this at the introductory workshop.

Students began receiving books from the Home-Classroom Library to be read at home daily and returned the following day in their "briefcases". Within the "briefcases"

was an activity to be completed by the student with a parent at home. The activity was a card suggesting, for example, that the parent and child write and illustrate a story about their favorite television shows together. Materials to complete the activity were provided in the "briefcases". The books and completed activities were returned to school the following day. Students discussed the completed daily activities with teachers and their peers.

The writer found that the Home-Classroom Library component created a liaison between school and home and home and school, as indicated by Wrobleski (1990). In casual conversations, the children expressed their excitement and enthusiasm for having their parents read to them daily from books brought home from school. It was as if one merged with the other, and the impact upon the children and their parents was the realization that school and home were interdependent and supportive.

Card pockets were attached to the back of each book by parent volunteers. Parent-Comments Sheets, Parent-Correspondence Sheets, Library Cards with the child's picture attached, and Bookmarkers were made displaying the library logo of "Bubbles the Bookworm", as suggested by MacCarry (1989) and the writer. Students created their own "briefcases" which were laminated by the writer for durability to transport the books and writing materials between school and home (Wrobleski, 1990). The writer was able to account for books by inspecting and reading the Parent-Comment Sheets accompanying the books every morning and maintaining a daily class role of students and books. Additionally, a Student-Library Card Chart containing card pockets with each student's picture attached was maintained. Students were able to identify books chosen by placing

the book file card in their designated pockets adorned with their pictures. To choose a new book, students would return the "old" book's file card to its pocket attached to the book's back and place the "new" file card into the students' designated pockets located on the Student-Library Card Chart.

The Parent-Comment Sheets allowed the writer to communicate with parents daily. Many would write comments about the book they had read. The students couldn't wait for their teacher to read the parent comments aloud to the other students. Often parents would write an additional note to the teacher requesting books pertaining to a specific subject or theme. One parent wrote that this project had solved the problem of putting her child to bed. Her child now looked forward to reading her book right before bedtime. Another parent wrote that her child insisted that the book be read right after school, eliminating his usual cartoon watching in the afternoon. It was by way of the Parent-Comment Sheets, that the writer became truly aware of the parents' genuine need for the library component when a particular parent, who had not participated in any school activities nor had been present at any school functions, wrote to say how grateful, appreciative, and helpful she felt the library was for her son and her family. In fact, she wrote, "Thank you, thank you, thank you for the books." The Parent-Comment Sheets also allowed parents to enhance the writing and language skills of their children by modeling appropriate literacy behaviors.

Daily, and beginning the fifth week, the Home-Friend Project (stuffed animal) went home with a student to spend the night. Accompanying the Home-Friend was a suitcase (backpack) containing a pair of pajamas and slippers, a journal, and an introductory story-

letter from the Home Friend. Each night the Home Friend went home with a student. Families made entries into the journal about the events associated with the Home Friend's visit. Families had the opportunity to read entries made by the peer families.

Using Helm's (1994) suggestion of providing a stuffed doll with a journal for recording events of night visits to the homes of the students was immensely successful. This third component of the practicum was initially named the "Home-Friend" component. However, the students renamed the doll "Bed Buddy". Therefore, this component was renamed "Bed Buddy" as required by the students. Every night a student was randomly selected to bring Bed Buddy home. Bed Buddy was a stuffed monkey dressed in overalls and was accompanied with a pair of pajamas, a small stuffed bear, and a journal. All these were conveniently packed in a backpack for easy transportation between school and home. The first page of the journal was a letter to parents from Bed Buddy which introduced himself, and explained that he was to spend the night with the student's family, and the journal was supplied for parents to record the events of his visits. The adventures of Mr. Bed Buddy became very involved, according to the entries in the journal. Mr. Bed Buddy accompanied the students and their families to the doctor, sport games, dancing classes, relatives' homes, birthday parties, family reunions, and even cooked meals with families. His own personality and characteristics began to emerge through the entries made in the journal by the students' families. For example, he did not like to eat carrots or string beans, but loved to ride a two-wheeled bicycle. All 19 families participated in this component. Again, support for their children's literacy development was established by parents through this activity. The students were eager to hear the nightly events of Mr.

Bed Buddy from their peers.

The Home-Friend component provided students with an awareness that their lives were very similar. Many students were surprised that their peers had grandparents as they did, or that their mothers required them to go to bed at the same time and brush their teeth. In fact, one parent requested that Mr. Bed Buddy have his own toothbrush, and then supplied one. Mr. Bed Buddy also assisted parents in getting their children to bed. Students also expressed to the writer that they loved to have the adventures of other students in the journal read to them by their families. The results of this component promoted the relaxation and enjoyment that literacy experiences can bring to families (Sperock, 1991).

Compilation of parents who had volunteered to read at school was completed. Schedules for parents to participate were completed and parents were notified of their assigned times to read to students at school. Compilation of parents' chosen days to participate in the Parent-Child Computer Lab was completed. Parents were notified of their assigned times. Implementation of the Parent Reading Volunteers component and the Parent-Child Computer Lab component was initiated.

Following the implementation of the Parent-Reading Volunteers and Parent-Child Computer Lab components, the Can Collection Project component began. The Can Collection component provided the children and their families with an opportunity to participate in a combination of math and literacy activities at home by counting and recording the amount of cans they collected while acquiring a sense of community by helping a child who was less fortunate than they. Notices to parents were issued. Parents

were reminded to count and record the number of cans collected with their children. Specific information concerning the can collection, as designated by the recycling company, was given to parents during the first workshop. The writer maintained a running count for each family, and a cumulative total of cans collected for the entire class. Once a month, parents and children wrote and illustrated a letter that was sent to the disabled child.

The Can Collection component was able to involve the children and their families in a project by which they could work together to ultimately acquire funds in assisting a disabled preschool child in purchasing a wheel chair. Although the area serviced by the preschool is rural and covers a vast area, many families served by the preschool are acquainted with or related to one another. Therefore, families of other students in the preschool asked to participate in the Can Collection component, too.

At the first workshop, parents were instructed to collect, rinse, smash, and count the number of cans collected with their children. As the project progressed, many preschool families participated. Of course, the lack of transportation eliminated the ability of families to bring large amounts of cans to school at one time, and limited the number of cans students could bring to school in their school bags. Students would sometimes bring as little as 5 cans or less at a time. However, the students were able to count 5 or less cans, thus improving their math skills. One family was able to collect seven trash bags full of cans. The student who brought them did not count the cans, but was able to count 6 of the bags. One student encouraged an older sibling to collect cans for the disabled. The older sibling collected cans from neighbors, friends, and businesses. As a result of his

efforts, he was able to donate a large donation to the disabled and his dedication to the project was heralded in his family's local newspaper. At the conclusion of this project, families were very proud of their accomplishment and participation.

A very welcomed and unexpected result of this component was that the scrap metal business who received the cans donated 50 cents more per pound than was normally paid. As suggested by Rich (1991), when businesses and the community are committed to education, parents begin to recognize its importance. The community organization who had located the disabled child was very grateful to receive the funds for the wheel chair. Of course, the child and her family were also pleased.

Notices followed by reminders were sent to parents inviting them to the second parent literacy workshop. Outside personnel involved in the workshop were notified. The second literacy workshop for the parents, which also included the children, was held. At this workshop, parents engaged in storytelling activities with their children. The Literacy Coordinator was the main speaker at this workshop. Storytelling and reading books aloud to children were demonstrated and practiced. Information packets, refreshments, and prizes were distributed to parents.

A continuation of the components previously identified were monitored. These components included the Home-Classroom Library, Home Friend Project, Parent Reading Volunteers, Can Collection Project, and Parent-Child Computer Lab Project.

Once five of the components had been implemented, notification of outside personnel who were to be involved in the third workshop were recontacted. A well-known storyteller in the area, who was an expert in African-American storytelling, was invited to

be the guest presenter of the workshop. Notices and reminders were sent to parents inviting them to participate in the third workshop. Parents were notified that their children would also participate in the workshop activities.

Once the parents had been invited and notified, the third workshop was conducted. Information packets, refreshments, and prizes were distributed. Parental informal oral evaluations of all the components of the literacy program were conducted at this workshop. Modifications, revisions, and suggestions for improving the program were noted and collected during the workshop. Parents were made aware of their involvement and "ownership" in revising the program. Parents and children were eager to participate in storytelling activities with a well-known African-American storyteller.

A written report of the modifications, revisions, and suggestions made by parents during the third workshop were sent to the parents. An example of a suggestion made by a parent was since transportation to and from the center was a very common problem for parents, those parents who were able to participate with their children in the Parent-Child Computer Lab, plan to remain or arrive earlier than their appointed "computer time" in order to participate in the Parent-Reading Volunteers component, thereby eliminating the need for additional "trips" to and from the center. Other parents "piggybacked" on her idea and suggested that a voluntary "Parent List" identifying the students' names, addresses, telephone numbers, and parents names be supplied to them, so that "car pools" might be established. Parents also tried to coordinate their schedules with their addresses to accommodate the "car pool" suggestion.

Parents also suggested that a picture album of each student be created to include the

pictures of the students working with their parents at the workshops. Historically, the writer and her assistant always provided parents with a picture album of their children's activities during the school year. Of course, this suggestion was also included in the children's picture albums. Changes in the project initiated by the parents, were implemented where possible.

The writer sent notices and reminders to parents inviting them to the fourth parent literacy workshop. Materials required for this workshop were donated by local businesses. This workshop involved parents interacting with their children. In the notices inviting parents to the workshop, parents were asked to bring specific information about the birth of their children (such as their child's weight and length at birth), their child's baby blanket, and a baby picture of their child. Workshop personnel supplied rice, string, blue and pink ribbon, wiggly eyes, glue, rulers, support hosiery, red markers, pink and blue covered baby books (simply made from pink and blue construction paper and writing paper with ribbons), and baby scales. Notices inviting parents to the fourth workshop were issued.

The fourth workshop involving parents with their children was conducted. With their children, parents "recreated" their child as a newborn baby doll. Using a leg of the support hosiery, parents tied a knot at the "toe". Depending upon the sex of the child, a blue or pink ribbon was tied on the knot. The "face" of the baby was created by filling the hosiery with rice. Wiggly eyes were attached with glue. The face was secured by tying a string. The "body" of the baby was filled with rice. The amount of rice required was determined by the baby's birth weight and length. Parents and children used baby scales

and rulers to determine this. Once the baby was completed, the baby's mouth was created using red markers. Parent and child then wrapped the baby in the baby blanket. Parent and child wrote and illustrated their experiences and feelings in the baby book provided, including the statistical information, such as weight, length, sex, hair and eye color. Parents brought the babies and baby books home to read and interact with their families at home. Parents also assisted children whose parents could not attend. Refreshments and prizes were distributed.

Parents who were able to attend, were very enthusiastic and receptive to the Parent Literacy Workshops, and seemed to participate in the workshops with an unanticipated "child-like" quality. Unexpectedly, parents often "took over" the workshops by making suggestions and providing meaningful observations to improve the workshops for themselves and their children. For example, during the "Rice Babies Workshop", parents suggested that the rice babies could be improved by supplying eyelashes for their eyes and providing the babies with toy pacifiers. The writer was excited to watch as the parents created curls for their children's rice babies using scraps left from the stockings and actually began extending the workshop by singing lullabies to the babies with their children.

The students enjoyed this workshop, too. Boys and girls carried their rice babies with them throughout the duration of the workshop. Parents who were able to attend were perfectly content to assist the teachers in creating the "rice babies" for those children whose parents were unable to attend. The dialogues that emerged between parents and their children and between the children and their rice babies were very exciting. Parents

also included writing memorable "baby stories" in their children's baby albums supplied by the writer. The next day a parent informed the writer that her son actually had her bring his "baby" to his baseball game and also rode his "baby" on his bike to show his grandmother.

As these project components continued, materials for the fifth workshop were accumulated. Workshop personnel acquired poster boards, a laminating machine, cutouts, scissors, markers, glue, and cotton balls for parents to create the storytelling doll "There Was An Old Lady". Workshop coordinators presented the sample for parents to generate their ideas for their own creations and interpretations of the story. Notices and reminders were sent to parents inviting them to attend the fifth workshop.

The fifth workshop was held with parents and their children engaging in activities together. Parents participated in using the sample doll, while telling and singing the story of "There Was An Old Lady". Parents were provided with the materials to create the storytelling doll. Once completed, parents practiced using the doll to tell the story to their own children. Refreshments and prizes were distributed.

At the end of the twenty-first week, the Can Collection Project was completed. The total amount of cans collected and the total amount of money received was tabulated with the students. Arrangements were made for the money to be donated to the special child to purchase special equipment. Preparations for donating the money to the special child at the sixth workshop were begun.

Following the completion of the Can Collection component, the special child and his family were invited to attend the sixth workshop. The arrangements to present the

monetary donation to the special child were completed. The local newspaper was invited to attend the presentation.

Notices and reminders were sent to parents inviting them to the sixth workshop. Parents were also notified that the monetary donation to purchase a wheelchair for the special child would occur at this workshop and that their children would be participating in the workshop with them. The newspaper was invited to report the event. During the workshop, parents and children wrote letters to the special child. These letters were read by the parents with their children to the special child. The letters were compiled in an album and were presented to the special child along with the monetary donation.

Following the sixth workshop, appointments for home visits were made. Appointments were made by phone, followed by a written reminder to parents.

Schedules for introducing the Transition to Kindergarten and Tour workshop were verified. School authorities at the three primary schools were contacted and a visitation day established. Programs and information packets were prepared for each school. A tour of the schools and the kindergartens was included.

After the schedules for the primary schools' workshops and tours were verified, the writer made home visits to the families of her students as scheduled. During the visits, parents completed the written Parent-Survey (see Appendix A). Parents who had not been visited received the Parent-Survey to be completed and returned to school. During the visits, parents identified the primary schools where their children would be attending kindergarten. Notices and reminders inviting parents to the seventh workshop were issued.

Home visits continued and were completed at the end of this week. The seventh workshop was also held. Photographs and a video were shown to parents and children recapturing their participation in the program. Parents were asked to informally critique the program, providing any suggestions, revisions, or modifications they felt might need improvement. These suggestions were noted and compiled. Students received literacy packets containing a new book, a special pencil, crayons, and a writing tablet. Certificates of Participation were awarded to parents and children. These certificates contained the name of the project (Family Literacy Project), the name of the recipient, date awarded, and were adorned with an award ribbon and graphics of students, a family, and books. The children also received Program Computer certificates. These certificates contained the name of the recipient, the date awarded, and included graphics of an American flag, books, alphabet, and a computer. Refreshments and prizes were distributed.

Following the Kindergarten Transition Workshop and Tour, the post-readiness instrument was administered to the students. These results were compiled, tabulated, and shared with parents at parent-teacher conferences. Parents were notified of their appointments through written notices and follow-up phone calls.

Appointments for parents and students to attend "Visitation Day" at their primary schools were scheduled. Invitations for parents and their children to attend were sent to families. Administration of the post-readiness instrument to the students was completed.

Families attended "Visitation Days" at their primary schools. Families received information from a presentation given by the various primary school staffs and enjoyed a tour of the schools and kindergartens. Each primary school designated a "contact person"

for Head Start families. Those families who did not attend were provided with the information packets supplied by the primary schools. The primary schools made appointments for children to be assessed using the kindergarten assessment instrument. Parents were sent written notifications of their children's designated appointment times. This assessment process occurred in the primary schools and was administered by the kindergarten teachers. Parents were present during the assessment process.

As the results of the kindergarten assessment instrument were completed and the data compiled, students were assessed and placed on a list for kindergarten placement. Results of the assessment were given to the preschool teachers and parents. Once the kindergarten assessments were completed and their results tabulated, the primary schools provided the preschool teachers with a list of their results. During the implementation period, the school district abolished developmental kindergarten classification. Therefore, only kindergarten classification was established for student placement. However, as a result of the kindergarten assessment instrument, the names of students who had been identified as candidates for kindergarten success were placed on a list and given to the writer.

The results of all assessments, surveys, attendance records, lists, and their comparisons were compiled and tabulated at the completion of the implementation period. The implementation period required 8 months to complete.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The problem to be solved in this practicum was students were exiting the Head Start Program without the literacy background necessary to be successful in kindergarten. Head Start parents were unable to assist the teachers in supporting the emergent literacy development of their young children to be successful in kindergarten.

The solution strategies designated for solving the problem identified by the writer incorporated ideas found in the literature with ideas generated by the writer. For students to be able to exit the Head Start Program with the literacy background necessary to be successful in kindergarten, a simple, cost-effective, comprehensive, multi-dimensional program involving students, parents, teachers and staff, businesses, and community organizations was developed. Students and their families were provided with books, materials, activities, workshops, projects, and a computer lab to promote the emergent literacy development of the students to be successful in kindergarten when exiting the Head Start Program.

The writer initially began surveying and assessing 20 students and their families during the initial phase of this practicum. However, after completing six weeks of the implementation phase, one student was placed into another school setting to receive

special services. Therefore, the results derived from this practicum were based upon data compiled from assessments and surveys of 19 students and 19 parents.

Outcome 1 stated that 18 of 20 families would participate in literacy activities with their children. The standard of achievement for Outcome 1 was a positive score on 7 of the 8 items on the written Parent Survey (see Appendix A). The written survey used a Likert Scale for parents to respond. The results after the practicum implementation indicated that 18 of 19 families received a positive score on the written Parent Survey (see Table 1). Thus, Outcome 1 was achieved. The written Parent Survey was administered to parents during scheduled Home Visit days.

Outcome 2 stated that 18 of 20 families would participate in computer literacy activities with their children. The standard of achievement for Outcome 2 was 18 of 20 parents each participating in computer literacy activities with their children 5 times during the implementation period. A Computer Parent Participation Log (see Appendix B) was maintained to record the results of this outcome. The results after the practicum implementation indicated that 5 of 19 parents each participated in computer literacy activities with their children 5 or more times during the implementation period (see Table 1). Therefore, Outcome 2 was not achieved.

Outcome 3 stated that 18 of 20 families would feel "more" confident reading aloud to their children. The standard of achievement for Outcome 3 was 18 of 20 parents indicating a positive score on Item 8 on the written Parent Survey (see Appendix A). The results after the practicum implementation indicated that 18 of 19 parents received a positive score on Item 8 on the written Parent Survey (see Table 1). Therefore, Outcome

3 was achieved. The written Parent Survey was administered to parents during scheduled Home Visit days.

Outcome 4 stated that 18 of 20 students would be developmentally 1 year or less below their chronological age when exiting the preschool program. The standard of achievement for Outcome 4 was 18 of 20 students being developmentally 1 year or less below their chronological age when exiting the preschool program as measured by the Daberon-2 Screening for School Readiness (Danzer et al., 1991) instrument. The results after the practicum implementation indicated that 19 of 19 students were developmentally 1 year or less below their chronological age when exiting the preschool program as measured by the Daberon-2 Screening for School Readiness (Danzer et al., 1991) instrument (see Table 1). Therefore, Outcome 4 was achieved.

Outcome 5 stated that 12 of 20 students will be placed into kindergarten, rather than into developmental kindergarten. The standard of achievement for Outcome 5 was 12 of 20 students being placed on a list who have been recommended for kindergarten. However, during the implementation period, the school district abolished the developmental kindergarten classification and replaced it with kindergarten classification. Therefore, as a result of the kindergarten assessment instrument, a list identifying those students who would be successful in kindergarten was provided for the writer. The results after the practicum implementation indicated that 13 of 19 students were placed on a list to be successful in kindergarten (see Table 1). Therefore, Outcome 5 was achieved.

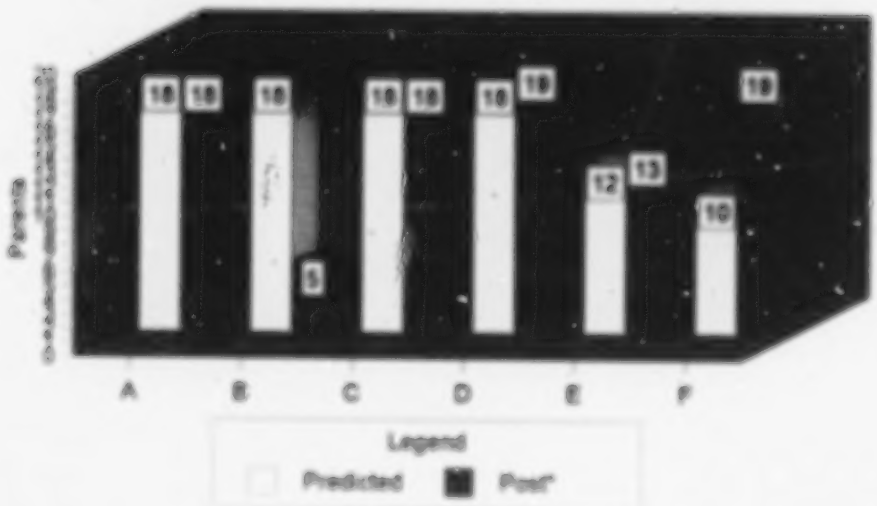
Outcome 6 stated that 10 of 20 parents will attend workshops regularly throughout the year. This outcome will be measured by a Parent Participation Log (see Appendix C).

The standard of achievement for Outcome 6 was a positive score on an oral survey (see Appendix D) of 18 students able to distinguish printed words from illustrations in books read to students by their parents selected from the Home-Classroom Library. The results after practicum implementation were an average of 10 of 19 parents attending Parent Workshops and, 19 of 19 students receiving a positive score on an oral survey whereby the students were able to distinguish printed words from illustrations in books read to students by their parents selected from the Home-Classroom Library (see Table 1) Therefore, Outcome 6 was achieved.

An analysis of the outcomes of this practicum, demonstrating the final results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Predicted and Post Survey Comparison



* Lost 1 student during implementation

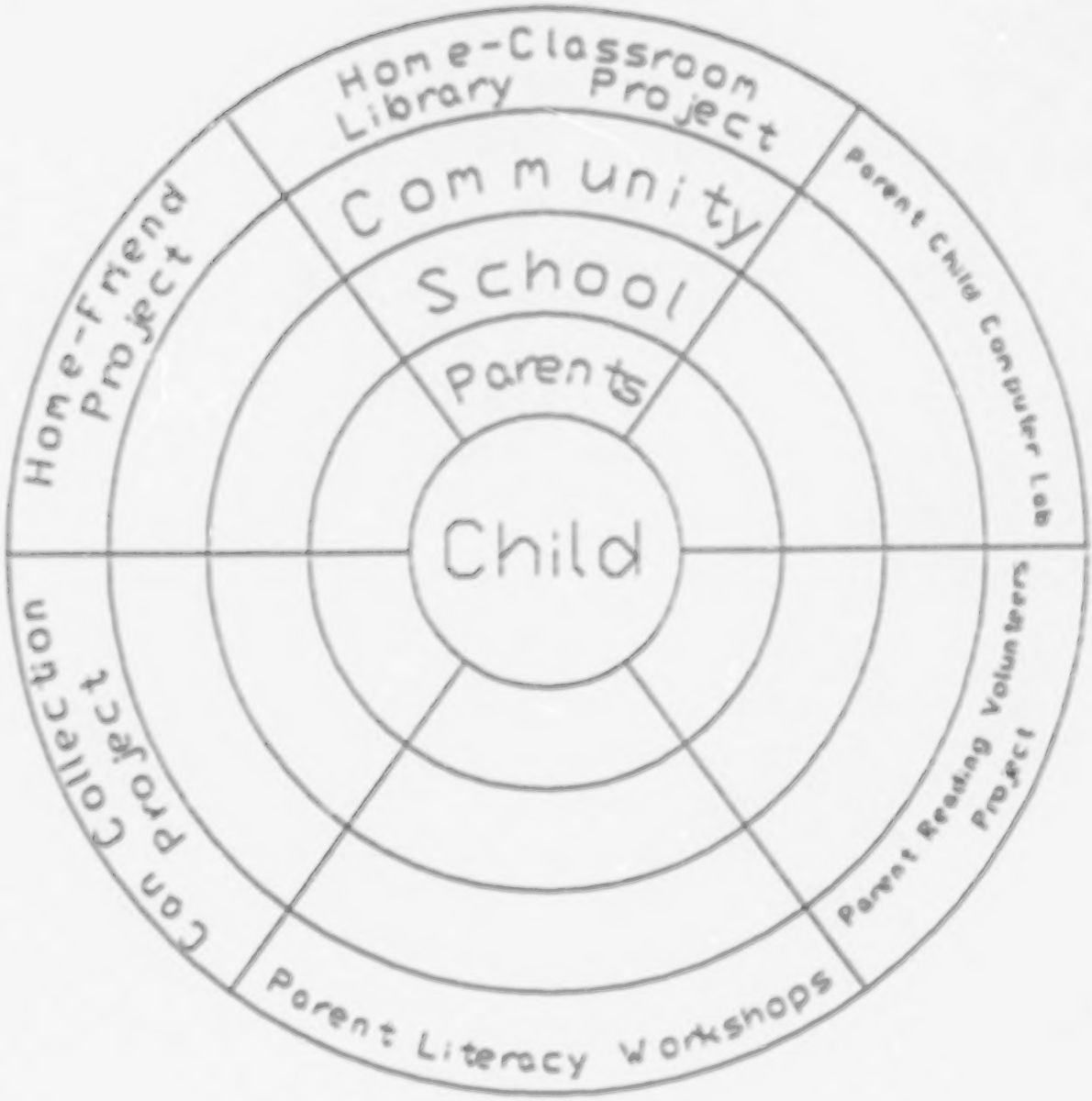
Outcome 1: A - Number of families participating in literacy activities with their children
Outcome 2: B - Number of families participating in computer literacy activities with their children
Outcome 3: C - Number of families indicating that they had "more confident" reading aloud to their children
Outcome 4: D - Number of students developmentally 1 year or less below their chronological age on existing preschool programs
Outcome 5: E - Number of students placed on a list to be successful in kindergarten
Outcome 6: F - Number of students receiving a positive score on an oral survey distinguishing printed words from illustrations

Discussion

The writer created a comprehensive, cost-effective (France, 1991), multidimensional program through which parents, working in partnership with teachers, could support the emergent literacy development of their children in promoting their children's success in kindergarten. This program incorporated six components. These six components included a Home-Classroom Library, a Home-Friend, Parent Literacy Workshops, a Can Collection Project, Parent Reading Volunteers Project, and a Parent-Child Computer Lab (see Figure 1). The writer hypothesized that a non-threatening literacy program which empowered parents with the skills and opportunities to support the emergent literacy development of their children, would be effective for their children's success in kindergarten. The writer further speculated that "ghost" parents (parents who had not been seen nor had participated in school activities in any manner) might view these components as a welcomed vehicle by which they could participate in their children's education and literacy development, regardless of their life circumstances. Therefore, this project was created to respectfully acknowledge the difficulties disadvantaged parents may have in supporting the education and literacy development of their children and to assist parents in bypassing those difficulties with a thoughtful, comprehensive, viable program by which parents would be enabled to support their children's education and literacy development, resulting in their children's future success in kindergarten.

The overall results of this practicum revealed that the writer's hypothesis was justified. Parents were very supportive, enthusiastic, and committed to their participation in the practicum process. It was as if the writer had "opened a door" through which

Figure 1
Family-School Literacy Project Model



parents could pass for the first time and participate in the literacy development and education of their children.

One of the results of the Home-Classroom Library component was that all the children indicated through informal oral conversations that books were being shared with their parents or family members daily. In the conversations with the children, it became apparent that this component not only exposed the children to literature, but also became a vehicle by which the children and their parents became closer. The students indicated to the writer that the time designated at home for reading books was a very special time of day for them. As Taylor and Strickland (1986) and Dickinson (1989) have stated, parents who read books to their children create an environment where opportunities for academic success have increased and where children associate reading books with feelings of warmth, safety, and joy.

Unanticipated results of the Home-Classroom Library component were the children became more responsible for their belongings, and their self-help skills increased. No child wanted to be without a book. Therefore, the majority of them consistently brought their folders in their backpacks between school and home every day. The writer was very pleased that the language skills, particularly of the non-verbal students, had increased. Just by reading and discussing the books with adults and peers, all the students were able to increase their literacy and language skills. Also, the increased socialization skills of the children was an unanticipated result of this component. Students who had not socialized prior to the implementation of the library were interacting with, discussing, and recommending books to their peers. In fact, new friendships were developed from sharing

books.

Another result of the Home-Classroom Library component was parents stated that they had 10 or more books available to read to their children at home. The library supplied families with a variety of multicultural, developmentally appropriate books daily (Gottschall, 1995). The writer had explained to parents at the first parent literacy workshop and in an introductory letter that reading aloud to their children was considered the single most important activity parents can do to promote academic success (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985). By establishing a library liaison between school and home, parents who previously had little or no access to books for their young children, now had access and a variety from which to choose. A large number of the library's books and writing materials were donated or offered at a reduced rate by businesses and community organizations, as suggested by Rich (1991) and France and Hager (1993).

An unanticipated result of supplying the books for the families was the respectful maintenance and care the books received. Since many of the books were used, the writer anticipated that their handling by so many might result in a high number of destroyed books. However, the writer found that many books had been repaired and/or well-maintained by the families. In fact, although 20 books were sent home and returned to school daily, less than 10 books had been lost or destroyed at the conclusion of the implementation period.

The library component was helpful in reaching Outcome 1, in that the results found 19 of 20 families had participated in this component as measured by the Parent Survey. These results indicated that parents who had little time, limited resources, and limited or

no transportation, were supplied with books to read with their children daily. The library component eliminated the needs for parents to find the time, to have the resources, and to find transportation to school or the public library to acquire books. These books were supplied to families daily. This component of the project recognized that some parents would not come to the school setting, but still could participate at home (Galen, 1991, Powell, 1986).

The Parent-Comment Sheets indicated to the writer that many times adults other than the child's parent had read the books. Siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other adults often completed the Parent-Comment Sheets. Some of the students stated that family members often competed for the privilege of reading the books to the students. This revelation by the children indicated that this project may have increased the number of reading role models for the children.

Although Outcome 2, which stated that 18 of 20 parents would participate in computer activities with their children 5 times each during the implementation period, was not met, 5 parents were dedicated to participating in the Parent-Child Computer Lab 5 or more times. In fact, one parent walked 3 and one-half miles to the center and home again averaging 3 days a week participation time with her child. Another mother had to bring her 2-year-old son and a 2-week-old newborn baby boy with her to the computer lab, but averaged 2 days a week participation time with her child. A third parent was so enthusiastic about the computer lab being offered for her and her child, that she actually video-taped his progress during the implementation period. The writer found that for those parents and children who had been able to participate in the Parent-Child Computer

Lab, the parents became as excited and enthusiastic about the process as were their children. As stated by Tuantin, Wright, and Thouvenelle (1989), parents became aware of the potential of computer technology in their own life situations.

The writer found that even though parents did not participate in the number that the writer had projected, the students' problem-solving skills, creativity, social, and literacy skills had increased as noted by Clements, Nastasi, and Swaminathan (1993). An unanticipated explanation for this finding might be that as children brought home their computer stories and activities, often parents would return the projects with their comments and additions to their children's work. The writer suspects that she had overestimated the number of parents who would have been able to participate in the Computer Lab, since there was no public transportation or child-care available to them. However, the writer was made aware of the parents' support and enthusiasm for this component by their unanticipated comments and additions to their children's computer activities.

Another problem experienced by the writer in implementing the Computer Lab component was the inability to provide two computers for the students and their families. The writer was given permission to share one computer with the speech pathologist. However, if the writer had been able to provide two computer systems for the students and their families, as recommended by the staff of MOBIUS Corporation (1990), the results for the students may have been higher. MOBIUS Corporation (1994) has further stated that early intervention programs must include a strong parental involvement component involving both parents and children in literacy activities to be effective. They

feel that computer technology provides at-risk parents with a very "powerful tool" to acquire the literacy and social skills necessary to provide for their families.

There were many unanticipated results of and insights gained from the Parent Workshops. Parents often brought friends, family members, and parents of other students in the center to the workshops. Parents were encouraged to participate in workshop discussions and to provide suggestions that would be helpful to them. Parents seemed to be more comfortable and "at ease" attending workshops with a smaller number of participants than they were when attending workshops for the whole center. The writer has surmised that this unanticipated result stems from low-income families' feelings of incompetence, distrustfulness, and insecurity in school situations (Marvogenes, 1990; Toomey, 1992). Therefore, by providing parents with an intimate, informal, nonthreatening workshop environment, they were better able to contribute and participate in workshop activities.

Another unanticipated result was that parents who were able to attend the workshops, were very mindful of the students whose parents who were unable to attend. Parents volunteered to bring the information and workshop packets to those parents who did not participate in the workshops. Parents also informed the writer that conducting the workshops with only the families of the writer's students was less intimidating for them. They explained that large groups made them "nervous."

The writer was surprised to learn from a parent attending the Introduction to the Parent Literacy Project Workshop that the libraries in the area would periodically visit each child's home in the "Bookmobile" providing developmentally appropriate books for

the children. She happened to remember the "Bookmobile's" telephone number and provided it to the parents and to the writer. This information was also provided to parents not in attendance by the writer.

A very pleasant unexpected result of the Song Picture Book Workshop was the singing talent of the parents and their children. The writer discovered that many of the parents were members of their churches' choirs and clearly enjoyed singing. Watching the students singing with their parents as they participated together in the song picture book activity, the writer became aware of the importance of song, music, and singing in the lives of these families. As was suggested by Barclay and Walwer (1992), the writer discovered that parents and their children could easily relate to and identify with the songs and the lyrics of song picture books. These books helped parents feel more at ease reading books with their children.

The Parent-Volunteers Reading component although successful, was limited. The problem of transportation, child-care, and job requirements significantly reduced the number of parents able to participate in this component. Only 4 parents a month were able to read aloud to the students in the Book Center. Following the suggestions of Lancy and Nattiv (1992), parents were invited to read to only two children at a time. Parents usually participated during center time for an average of 40 minutes. Although less often, parents who happened to arrive in the classroom unexpectedly were encouraged to remain for a while and read aloud to the children. Therefore, their participation was unexpected and sporadic. However, their children were very pleased to have them participating, interacting, and reading aloud to them in the Book Center.

A delightful unanticipated result was the participation of a mother who had a very pleasant voice and was able to sing the words of a story to the children. Needless to say, she gained the attention and adoration of more than two children.

Outcome 3, which stated that 18 of 20 parents would receive a positive score on item 8 of the Parent Survey (see Appendix A), was met. Outcome 4, which stated that 18 of 20 students would be developmentally 1 year or less below their chronological age when exiting the preschool program as measured by the Daberon-2 Screening for School Readiness (Danzer et al., 1991) instrument was also met. These results indicated that the multifaceted, multidimensional characteristics of this practicum culminated in parents indicating that they felt "more confident" reading aloud to their children. Furthermore, their children had made substantial developmental progress during the implementation period as noted by France (1991). Providing many opportunities which speak to the diverse needs of disadvantaged parents in supporting the education and literacy development of their young children have proven to be effective. By establishing a program which recognized that the setting where parents are valued as the main influences in their children's lives (National Association of State Boards of Education, 1988) and was respectful of the living circumstances of parents (Powell, 1986), the writer was able to establish positive short- and long-term results by providing "support for" rather than "education of" impoverished parents (Seitz, Rosenbaum, & Apfel, 1985).

During the second workshop, the Literacy Coordinator demonstrated appropriate techniques for reading aloud to young children, and included an activity by which parents created, illustrated, wrote, and read books with their children. Parents were able to

practice reading aloud to their children with books created by them with the help of their children. Parents were provided with the materials necessary to create their books. There were a great variety of books created, including cook books, family albums, alphabet books, animal books, and books about numbers. The results of this workshop were helpful in teaching parents the skills of reading aloud to their children through actual demonstrations and practice as suggested by France and Hager (1993) and Mavrogenes (1990).

Two unexpected events occurred during the implementation period that modified two of the workshops. A month after implementation began, funding for the Head Start Program was severely reduced. Therefore, the funds allocated for the professional storyteller were eliminated. However, the Literacy Coordinator, who was an excellent storyteller, agreed to tell a story at the workshop. Unexpectedly, the parents and the children seemed to enjoy her presentation since they were familiar with her.

The second event also reduced funding for the Head Start Program and the entire school district. Two months after implementation, the second unexpected event occurred. The state in which the preschool resides suffered a major flood disaster resulting in dramatic devastation to the entire area. In fact, the area in which the preschool resides was the first in the state to be declared a "Disaster Area" by President Clinton. Families lost their homes and the school district suffered damage to its buildings, including the sister Head Start Center.

Although the writer's center did have some damage, the center was spared major repairs. However, many schools were flooded or used as shelters for dislocated families.

As a result, there clearly was no funding available to transport families to the primary schools for their kindergarten tour and transition workshop. In fact, scheduled field trips were also canceled. Furthermore, many of these schools were either damaged or being used as shelters. However, the writer was able to conduct the workshop by inviting the principals or school representatives to come to the center to provide information for the parents and their children. One school representative provided a small video presentation of the school, including its kindergarten component.

Administrators of the primary schools made plans to provide preschool families with information and tours of their schools and kindergarten centers as repairs to the schools were completed. They also provided a "contact person" for Head Start parents needing additional information. The writer suspects that attendance at the subsequent workshops was reduced by the effects of this devastating disaster.

Outcome 5 stated that 12 of 20 students would be placed in kindergarten. This outcome was measured by the kindergarten screening instrument and the standard of achievement was a list identifying those students who had been recommended for kindergarten placement. However, during the implementation period the school district abolished the developmental kindergarten classification. Therefore, all students were placed into kindergarten. Incoming students were assessed by the kindergarten teachers and placed on two lists identifying them as being successful or at-risk for kindergarten. The results indicated that 13 of 19 students were placed on a list and recommended for kindergarten placement. These results indicated that Outcome 5 was met. As Rich (1991) and Zigler (1990) have explained, schools cannot solve the problems of "at-risk" children

alone. Involvement of parents, families, and the community must be included in the overall strategy. The writer was mindful of these strategies in creating a welcoming, intense family literacy program that involved all these components as recommended by Greenberg (1989). This kind of program resulted in an overall improvement in student achievement and kindergarten placement (France, 1991). Furthermore, the writer found that this project was able to increase the parents' awareness of their importance in the development of their children (Rich, 1991; France & Hager, 1993).

Outcome 6 stated 10 of 20 parents will attend workshops regularly throughout the year. A Parent Participation Log (see Appendix C) indicated that an average of 10 of 19 parents attended workshops regularly. The standard of achievement was a positive score on an oral Student Survey (see Appendix D) of 18 students able to distinguish printed words from illustrations in books read to the students by their parents selected from the Home-Classroom Library. The results indicated that all 19 students were able to receive a positive score on the oral Student Survey. An exciting, unanticipated result of the project was that all 19 students were also able to distinguish printed words from illustrations in books not previously known to them.

As Ulmer (1991) and Shipman (1981) had found, a factor which diminishes the gains made by students and contributes to Head Start children arriving in kindergarten still "at-risk" for learning is limited parental involvement. Therefore, recognizing that the child's family is the most impactful component in a child's life (Gage & Workman, 1994), the writer created a project which included primary school administrators and personnel collaborating and visiting the preschool setting to observe and share information about the

"future kindergartners" in an effort to ensure a smoother transition for the students, their families, and their teachers (Maxwell & Eller, 1994).

The writer found that an improvement in the quality of the Head Start Program through refining and incorporating literacy skills, parental involvement, and computer skills along with its emphasis on socialization ensured preschoolers of a smoother transition into kindergarten (Meier, 1992). A positive transition program from Head Start into kindergarten was helpful in maintaining the effects of the intervention program into kindergarten (Greene, 1993; Ulmer, 1991).

In summary, the problem to be solved in this project was students were exiting the Head Start Program without the literacy background to be successful in kindergarten. To solve this problem, a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional project was created. The project consisted of six components which included a Home-Classroom Library, Home-Friend Project, Parent-Child Computer Lab, Can Collection Project, Parent-Reading Volunteers, and seven Parent Literacy Workshops. The project began with 20 students and their families. However, during the implementation period, one student was placed in a special education setting, leaving 19 students and their parents to complete the project. Five of the outcomes identified to promote the literacy development of the children through parental involvement and computer technology were achieved. Only one outcome, which was to have 18 of 20 families participating in computer literacy activities with their children 5 times during the implementation period, was not achieved. The writer has concluded that the lack of transportation and child-care combined with a major flood disaster occurring during the implementation period were factors which limited the results

of this outcome. Outcome results were determined by written and oral surveys.

Unanticipated outcomes included an extraordinary dedication to the project by the students and their parents. Parents were enthusiastic participants providing suggestions and implementing activities to improve the projects's components and effectiveness for themselves and their children. Children and parents indicated that the project had brought them closer to one another. Parents, who had never participated in school activities prior to the implementation of the project, became active members in the project's components. The children, also, became more responsible for their belongings, increased their self-help skills, became more skillful in counting and using one-to-one correspondence, improved their socialization skills and problem-solving abilities, increased their awareness of citizenship, and, enhanced their literacy skills in reading, writing, and language. Parents and students brought books and Mr. Bed Buddy back to school in good condition. Parents indicated that the project helped eliminate home conflicts with their children, and, had enticed other family and community members to become involved.

Overall, the project was very successful. Although all the outcomes were not met, transportation to the school setting, child-care needs, job requirements, and the flood disaster appear to be the reasons why the number of parents participating in the Parent-Child Computer Lab and Parent-Reading Volunteers components were not as high as the writer anticipated.

The writer has determined that since parents' support and participation are so crucial for their children's development, as with young children, the teacher needs to begin where parents are. Providing many opportunities in the school setting and in their homes which

speak to the diverse needs of disadvantaged parents in supporting the education and literacy development of their young children have proven to be effective. By establishing a project which recognized that the setting where parents are valued as the main influences in their children's lives and is respectful of their living circumstances, the writer was able to establish short- and long-term results.

Recommendations

The writer makes the following recommendations for implementing this project. 1. The writer recommends supplying two computer systems and identical software for use in the Parent-Child Computer Lab, and placement of the computer lab be detached from the classroom setting, to ensure intimacy and privacy between parent and child. 2. The writer recommends that each teacher in a school or center incorporate the project in his/her classroom individually, rather than collectively, to provide parents with a nonthreatening environment in which to be effective in promoting the literacy development of their children for kindergarten success.

Dissemination

Plans to disseminate the practicum results have been scheduled. The writer presented the practicum to the Louisiana Association for the Education of Young Children in New Orleans, Louisiana. Those attending the presentation were very enthusiastic and related their plans to the writer to implement the project in their work settings throughout the state. Those attending the presentation expressed their appreciation to the writer that the simple, cost-effective characteristic of the project allowed them to envision themselves implementing the project.

In the writer's work setting, other colleagues have incorporated the project in papers and projects required for advanced degrees and certification. Colleagues have also incorporated several of the project's components in their classroom settings.

The writer has been invited to present the practicum results to colleagues and educators involved in early childhood education during the coming school year. The writer has plans to submit an article describing the practicum results for publication in an established early childhood journal during the following summer months.

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APPENDIX A

PARENT SURVEY

Parent Survey

Directions Read each below. Circle the point on the line that is most true for you.

1. In our home, we have approximately _____ books available for my child to read.

0	1-3	4-7	10	10+

2. I have _____ time to read to my child.

no time		very little		plenty of time

3. I _____ have enough reading and writing materials at home.

never	hardly ever	sometimes	usually	nearly always

4. I _____ have transportation to get books from the library and attend workshops at school.

never	hardly ever	sometimes	usually	nearly always

5. I _____ read books aloud to my child.

never	rarely	several times a week	almost every day	at least once daily

6. I _____ read books, newspapers, magazines, or other printed materials.

never	rarely	several times a week	almost every day	at least once daily

7. I _____ have access to or have participated in computer literacy activities with my child.

never	hardly ever	sometimes	usually	nearly always

8. I _____ confident reading aloud to my child.

do not feel	feel a little	feel somewhat	feel more

APPENDIX B

COMPUTER LAB LOG

COMPUTER LOG
PLEASE SIGN IN

Week of _____

Parent's Name	Child's Name	Date	Time In	Time Out

APPENDIX C

PARENT WORKSHOP LOG

PARENT WORKSHOP LOG
PLEASE SIGN IN

Parent's Name	Child's Name	Date	Time In	Time Out

APPENDIX D

STUDENT SURVEY

Student Survey

Instructions Display a page of a book from the Classroom-Home Library that has been read to the student by the student's parent. Be sure to display the book directly in front of the student as if the student were reading the page displayed. The student may respond by pointing. Have the student perform the following by saying:

Question 1. Where are the pictures on this page?

Question 2. Where are the words on this page?

Student's Name _____

Date _____

Score _____